HARAMBEE FLAME

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The Spirit Of Malcolm

"Because a cat has kittens in an oven,
it don't make them biscuits."

When our brother, Malcolm, made this remark, he was not stating an opinion about the biological or genetic differences between members of the animal kingdom and members of a family of breads. He was talking about us, about American-born African folks. He was saying that the mere place of our birth does not change the reality of who we are. Malcolm's remark was simultaneously cultural and political. He could see that the competitive and selfishness-fostering American culture was doing us great harm. He could see that many of us had come to identify politically with America's political/economic system - with the slave-master - and that this was individually and collectively self-destructive.

Malcolm wanted us to come to the recognition of the fact that, despite our birth in America, we are African people. Malcolm observed that we had no sense of self aside from whatever identification we had been given by America's racist institutions. He observed that we had been and were continuing to be at the short end of America's stick and that we retained our vulnerability to that circumstance by lacking a knowledge of our historical selves and feeling, consequently, that we had to go on feeling powerless to stop taking it on the chin.

Malcolm not only observed these things in those around him but in himself as well. Recall that Malcolm once was a peddler of drugs, a pimp, and other unsavory things. Recall that he did penitentiary time. But Malcolm managed to rise up from that same monster's pit in which many of us crawl in even to this very day. Malcolm came to spend his time in prison studying and examining and reexamining himself. And he sought the guidance of others in working to get his life moving in a constructive direction.

Malcolm transformed himself from one who thought of himself, and other African folks in America, as a "nigger" to being one who had pride in his African heritage. But he was not satisfied with that. He was unwilling to halt his own growth. From being an exponent of mere "black pride" and hatred of the "devil white man," Malcolm became a revolutionary and a Pan-Africanist. He came to the realization that the enemy of African and other people of color, and the poor gene-

Malcolm

rally, was the so-called "free-enterprise" system in which the profits of those who own necessarily take precedence over the needs, rights, and aspirations of the rest of us. But, while he did reject his once-held stance that Caucasians were inherently devils, Malcolm retained his understanding of individual and institutional racism as being an enemy of people of color.

As a nationalist, Brother Malcolm exhorted African people in the U.S. to respect themselves and each other. He urged us to unify. As a Pan-Africanist, Malcolm journeyed back and forth between the States and the African continent, promoting unity among all people of African descent. As a revolutionary, Malcolm called, not for a reform of this nation's political/economic system, but for the abolition of it. As such, Malcolm became a threat to the nation's state of business-as-usual. He was, like Nat Turner, Martin Luther King, Fred Hampton, and others like them, assassinated.

"Because a cat has kittens in an oven, it don't make them biscuits." Surely the spirit of Malcolm writhes in pain and disappointment. For, in our own spirits, many of us are unquestionably biscuits. We have the physical characteristics, figuratively speaking, of cats yet lie down on our backs waiting for someone to put butter on us. Resting in the gravy of Americanization, far too many of us reject our Africanness in every conceivable way.

On the cultural level, we(particularly, men) frequently reject our own, in choosing mates, in favor of Caucasians; in many instances, reject our ethnicity by chemically treating our hair and even altering our noses and/or lips, via plastic surgery, in order to look more like Caucasians; tend, when we are upset with each other, to attempt to degrade each other by reminding each other of our color.

Politically, some of us continue to call for school integration instead of having enough pride in our own intelligence and capabilities to seek control over our own schools; many of our alleged "leaders" remain steadfastly stuck to the nipple of a Democratic Party which has made it increasingly clear that it does not represent our interests, while others among us are actually so muddle-headed as to be led by the hand by a Republican Party which cares even less about our interests.

In the social realm(how we relate to each other in our communities), we have assisted America in creating an environment in which murder is making African men a veritable endangered specie and in which African women are increasingly viewing African men as potential rapists. Some of us are so busy trying to keep pace with "Dallas" and "Dynasty" images that we neither help our neighbors nor, in many instances, even know them.

We are doing more, much more, in the way of disrespecting the memory of Malcolm, Sojourner Truth, Jomo Kenyatta, and many other African folks around the world and throughout history. We are doing more, much more in the way of disrespecting ourselves and each other. And, it is true, that many of us are doing positive things, constructive things. But our problems are serious, deadly serious. Thus, we must periodically-maybe constantly-remind ourselves and each other that we are in troubled times and that the trouble needs to be fixed.

The birthday of Malcolm is the 19th. of this month. Let us celebrate the memory of this important and giving human being. But let us also take sober stock of the meaning of his life, words, and deeds and the impact that Malcolm's spirit and ideas should have upon our lives.

-Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa/
Editor

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H.A.C.O. Banquet May 26th

"Our African Connection" is the theme for our annual banquet, which will be held here at the State Prison on the 26th. of May at 4:30 p.m. There will be presentation of awards for outstanding service, a fine meal, cultural events(including performances by two of the ACTSO participants, thanks to Wilma Hogan), and our guest speaker will be Ben Gray(host of "Kaleidoscope").

We are limited to receiving a maximum of 120 guests from the outside. With your help, we will pack the place. If you wish to attend, notify us by no later than May 19th. If the maximum allowed number of folks have confirmed by the time you notify us, we will, of course, give you this information. In order to notify us of your wish to attend our banquet, simply write to:

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE.
68502-0500

Or call 471-3161, ext. 380(Bill Huelsdonk)
379(Wayne Schreurs)
or
381(Don Hoffman)

African Poets in Neb.

Dr. Ella Robinson of the English Dept. at the University of Nebraska; prisoners (at the Nebraska State Pen) Hanee(Robert Toney), Wili Otey, and Mondo(David Rice); and Agbala Nwany Acho Aziokwu(T. Hopkins) of Omaha comprise the five poets whose works are contained in AFRICAN POETS IN NEBRASKA. This collection was published in April as a special edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME. To get your copy(ies) send your donation of $1.00, plus 40 ¢ postage to: Harambee Flame
Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
P.O. Box 2500
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68502-0500

Message From The Chairman

Fellow-members of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Brothers and Sisters, I am Ajabu Belemelah Habeshi(aka Alan Hardin), present chairman of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. I want to address all of you who receive the HARAMBEE FLAME and/or have been or are yet affiliated with our organization.

Since I was elected interim Chairman on Jan. 15, 1985, I have exercised the responsibility, given by our membership, to hold an office that is a great honor. But, on occasion, this has been more a job or adventure. H.A.C.O. has been in this institution for many years and the tradition of educating our fellow American-born African Brothers imprisoned here on the importance of our African culture and traditional beliefs. This function has been carried on by many dedicated men, struggling to preserve these concepts.

Looking back on this past year, I am reminded that we have had to endure many hardships and setbacks. But we have managed to maintain quality programming and some level of enthusiasm on the part of our membership. That has encouraged myself and the rest of the executive board to strive further to accomplish our objectives. It is, by no means, easy to operate in an institution such as this one and to, in trying to instill and reinforce cultural awareness, maintain a high level of enthusiasm. But we struggle and try to find new and different approaches.

In matters of politics, we have examined this nation's political structure, the black man's position in it, and the pros and cons. During our Kwanzaa Celebration, several of our members took advantage of the opportunity to stand up in front of the Sisters and Brothers and express themselves on the question of brotherhood-and-unity. At our February 19th. Afrikan History Month symposium, books for our children's educational reading purposes were exhibited, speeches on "socialization and

(Continued on p. 5)

From Other Sources

POLITICS IN CHICAGO

"Midpoint through his term, (Harold) Washington's most fundamental achievement has been to open up Chicago's government. In his first days in office, he signed a court decree, which his predecessors had long resisted, ending political influence in hiring. He also issued a freedom-of-information order. Last fall he made public the previously secret budget process...

"Washington has almost eliminated a $150 million deficit he inherited, saving millions through operational efficiencies--such as replacing streetlights at night(when you can see which ones are burnt out), computerizing the purchasing department, and improving tax collections--and trimming the patronage-ridden city's workforce by 10%. And he has dramatically increased the number of city contracts going to firms owned by Blacks, Latinos and women.

"In 1982 a federal court held that a 1980 remap of ward boundaries, engineered by then-Mayor Jane Byrne, discriminated against Blacks and Latinos. The court ordered a new map to create six additional minority wards--enough to shift the balance in the (city)council to Washington.

"...The case is currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, but it will certainly be settled before the 1987 election."

--from page 3 of the May 8 issue of THE GUARDIAN

THE SUDAN: TECHNOLOGY & TRADITION CLASH

"Especially since the late 1960's Sudan has embarked on a vigorous expansion of mechanized farming schemes, especially in the central rainlands of Sudan. The high profitability of mechanized farming --carried out on large plots(usually 1,000 feddans, or about 1,250 acres) leased to private investors by the government--had already attracted the interest of Sudan's urban merchants and traditional tribal leaders(gaining access to such lands as a form of patronage from the state). In 1968, the World Bank set up the Mechanized Farming Corporation to supervise the expansion of these projects. Plot size was raised to 1500 feddans to maximize tractor efficiency, and this form of agriculture spread rapidly. What it basically has amounted to is a kind of agricultural stripmining--the profit structure is such that crop rotation is ignored by the largely absentee proprietors, leading to rapid soil depletion. Confronted with the inevitable fall in productivity after a few years of such cultivation, the typical investor(80% of whom are now urban merchants, with many of the rest civil service or military pensioners) moves on to clear new lands. The social consequences have been disastrous, with pastoral nomads(perhaps numbering 25% of Sudan's population) finding their traditional lands increasingly encroached upon, forcing them to operate within more limited, and less desirable, areas. With farm machinery capable of clearing 1500 feddans a day, paying scant attention to the diving lines separating traditional grazing land from cultivated areas, the area available to to grazing had declined by 1984 to only about 30% of its original size. Pastoralist activity, not surprisingly, has become more ecologically destructive, with more and more livestock concentrated in smaller areas. The overall ecological impact has been a disaster--the massive clearing of brush and scrub-forest areas unleashes wind and rain erosion. And, due to a process some scientists have come to call 'biogeophysical feedback,' the overall decline in humidity has in turn reacted back adversely upon rainfall patters. Thus the process of 'desertification,' the encroachment of desert areas at a rate of ten kilometers a year, feeds upon itself in a cumulative fashion."

--from page 17 of the May 1 edition of REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

(FROM OTHER SOURCES continued on next page)

AMERICAN-BORN AFRICAN MEN AND WOMEN:

AN IMBALANCE

"...there are disturbing and growing sexual imbalances at almost every level of the Black community. A critical problem here is that the Black sex ratio --the number of Black males per 100 females--has been declining since 1910 and was reported at a low of 89.7 in 1981. Sociologist Robert Staples has said that if you exclude married men, imprisoned men and homosexuals, there is only one acceptable Black male for every five unmarried Black women."

--from page 64 of the February edition of EBONY MAGAZINE

AFRICAN FAMILIES IN THE U.S.

"Increasing numbers of women are rearing their children without the economic support of a husband/partner. The divorce rate more than doubled for all sectors of the population between 1970 and 1981. ...For Black women the ratio rose...from 104 to 289 divorces per 1000...These ratios do not include temporary or permanent separations--only legally finalized divorces. Thus the actual rate of functionally dissoved marriages is undoubtedly far higher.

"'Graphing the percentage of Black men out of the labor force or unemployed and the percentage of Black families headed by women yields two roughly parallel lines. In the past seven years alone, the number of Black families headed by women has risen by 700,000 and the ranks of Black men out of the labor force or unemployed has increased by the same number.'

"...While women's labor force participation rate has steadily increased, the gap between men's and women's wages has not closed. Today women earn 59¢ for every dollar that men earn.

--from pages 14-24 of the March/ April edition of THE BLACK SCHOLAR. Editor's note: the above passage represent a very tiny segment of the total amount of information and insights contained in an article by Linda Burnham on what is being called by some the "feminization of poverty." In the article, Burnham makes the point that institutional racism, as well as sexism, has contributed to the increasing numbers of poor, women-headed families in the U.S. The passages cited here were selected because they give us some insight into the process whereby so many African families in the U.S. are headed by Sisters and how it occurs that these families are so commonly hurting financially.

With respect to the "From Other Sources" section of the FLAME in general, it should be noted that the passages contained therein are excerpts from articles found in other publications.

Message...

the Black family" were given by both members and guests; and, in our regularly scheduled meetings, brothers and sisters from the surrounding black communities have shared their expertise with us, for which we are truly grateful.

But in all struggles, there are problems. Our elected Chairman, AlChico Wilson, resigned his position, which I was elected to fill. We struggled on. Changes which I instituted did not meet favorably with all members of H.A.C.O. We struggled on. Resignations by key members of the executive board, at untimely moments, set us back briefly. But we struggled on. Denials by the prison administration to allow our family members and friends(on our visiting lists) to attend our cultural and social functions have caused a decrease in membership and disgruntled feelings among those who have remained. But we still struggle on. We have made appeals to the general Black communities to assist us in our fight for for freedom of expression and association. Some have answered our cry. But some have not. Nevertheless, we STILL STRUGGLE ON! "Harambee" in Swahili means to "come together." With our combined efforts, one day maybe we shall.

--Ajabu

Poetry

Can You Quit

I quit! That's a word with great fright potential
We do quit, no argument there; fear and guilt walk the same road

I quit America
Selective quitting is healthy
Yet, even the people closest to you
Believe your quitting is a disease
Maybe they're right
I quit combing or cutting my hair
Let it do its own thing
No doubt I feel good
Just wouldn't go around counting
The times when the eye of the beholder
Saw all quitting as weakness

I quit America
My conviction is quite unpopular
What is this country but a popularity contest
My people are becoming more unlike themselves
Maybe they are the future
I quit living in the past and the future
Let time consist of only now
No surprise when I'm pulled in
Just wouldn't sit around waiting
For my oppressor to liberate me
Looked at quitting as a movement

I quit
And I admit: I am afraid
But this fear speaks of overcoming
The obstacles are producers of strength
And maybe some pain
I quit avoiding any of my feelings
Faced them with honest compassion
No longer afraid of the unknown
Just wouldn't slide around faking
Revolution - ranting at the daily injustices
Of those who knew not how to
when to or
why to just plain
Quit

Idu M. Maduli

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